

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 28/10/00

UA 341/00

Fear of ill-treatment/prisoners

of consci

MALAYSIAMohd Johari bin Yasim, Youth Leader of *Parti Keadilan Nasional*, Shah Alam Division

Zaidi Yusof, Executive member of Youth Movement of Selangor *Parti Keadilan Nasional*

**Nik Ismail Mohd Ros, Selangor Youth Secretary, *Parti Keadilan Nasional*
Hairi, activist for political reform**

More than 100 others

More than 120 people, including several women, have been arrested during a peaceful demonstration in support of jailed former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. They are believed to be held incommunicado, denied access to lawyers and their families, and they are at risk of ill-treatment.

Several thousand people took part in the 5 November demonstration, organized by the opposition *Parti Keadilan Nasional* (National Justice Party). Police fired tear gas and water cannon laced with chemicals to disperse the demonstrators, who had gathered on a highway outside Shah Alam. There are unconfirmed reports that police threw a tear gas canister into a truck containing dozens of arrested demonstrators.

Eyewitnesses report that police kicked, punched and assaulted many of the demonstrators with batons, smashed the windscreens of cars waiting on the highway and dragged out the occupants before arresting them. One demonstrator is reported to have needed specialist treatment after he was partially blinded by tear gas. Another man is reported to have suffered a fractured skull when he was hit by a tear gas canister as he tried to protect Anwar Ibrahim's wife, *Parti Keadilan Nasional* President Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who attended the demonstration in a wheelchair.

The *Parti Keadilan Nasional* reportedly applied several times for a permit to hold the demonstration, but were refused without any reasons given. The Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, has accused opposition parties of "deliberately breaching the law and inviting action against them".

One police officer is also reported to have been injured during the police operation to disperse the demonstrators.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in Malaysia are severely curtailed by an array of restrictive legislation, including the Police Act, which outlaws attendance at any unauthorized gathering of more than three people. Offenders may be punished with fines and imprisonment for up to one year. Since 1998 a series of public demonstrations in support of Anwar Ibrahim and calling for political reform have been suppressed with force. Well over 1,200 people have been arrested, many of whom were assaulted by the police.

Prisoner of conscience Anwar Ibrahim is serving 15 years in prison after a politically motivated conviction for sodomy.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all those detained on 5 November for exercising their right to peaceful assembly;
- urging that they not be ill-treated in custody and calling for them to be allowed immediate access to lawyers, relatives and medical attention;
- expressing concern at reports that police used tear gas against peaceful demonstrators, whom they beat and assaulted;
- calling for all reports of assaults by the police against demonstrators to be fully and independently investigated and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Home Affairs

Dato' Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi
Ministry of Home Affairs (Menteri Dalam Negeri)
Jalan Dato Onn,
50502 Kuala Lumpur
Fax: + 60 3 2301 217/ 603 2301051
Salutation:Dear Minister

Minister in Prime Minister's Department with responsibility for legal affairs

Datuk Dr. Rais Yatim
Law Division
Prime Minister's Department, Block 1
Federal Government Administration Centre
62502 Putrajaya, Selangor
Malaysia
Fax: + 60 3 8888 3424
Salutation:Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Chairman, Suhakam (Human Rights Commission)

Ybhg. Tan Sri Musa Hitam
Pengerusi Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia
Kementerian Luar Negeri
Wisma Putra
50602 Kuala Lumpur
Fax: + 603 424808 / 2425043
E-mail: humanrights@humanrights.com.my
Salutation:Dear Chairman

Inspector General of Police

Tan Sri Norian Mai
Ketua Polis Negara
Ibu pejabat Polis Diraja Malaysia
Bukit Aman
50502 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia
Fax: + 60 3 22731326
Salutation:Dear Inspector General

and to diplomatic representatives of Malaysia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 December 2000.